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Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 3/81)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

AMERICA ENCOURAGES EGYPT TO BEAR DOWN HARD ON LIBYA

Paris AL WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 21-27 Nov 80 pp 22,23

/Article: "Egypt: al-Qadhafi's Isolation Encourages al-Sadat To Invade Libya"/

/Text/ President al-Sadat is known to rely on inspiration from his genius for leadership and command in his political calculations, on many occasions disdaining the advice and opinions of his advisors and objective elements and circumstances which might not correspond with the spontaneous inspiration which descends upon him in his rural retreats.

However, this time President al-Sadat may find that the factors and circumstances which surround his unrelenting adversary President al-Qadhafi encourage him to launch a lightning war against Libya across the borders.

Egyptian press circles are circulating news, originating in the narrow source of advisors around the Egyptian president, to the effect that more than one "Libyan," "Arab" and "international" circumstance is encouraging Egypt to conduct a military operation against al-Qadhafi's regime, at this time in particular.

The "Libyan factors" encouraging the conduct of such an operation, in the calculations of the consultants to the presidency, are:

The deteriorating internal situation in Libya and the increasing oppressiveness of the trials of daily life on Libyan citizens as a result of al-Qadhafi's economic and social policy.

The breakdown and fragmentation of the Libyan administrative authorities and the smell of corruption which causes nasal congestion and extends to the big and the small.

The total isolation of the Libyan regime from the silent majority and its reliance on mercenary militias and security agencies.

A general feeling among Libyans that oil resource revenues are being wasted on foreign adventures which bring harm and annoyance upon Libya.

The escalating political opposition to President al-Qadhafi. It is no secret that a large number of Libyan opposition figures are living in Egypt, including

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some people who were close to the Libyan president in the past. They are all exerting pressure on Cairo to carry out some operation against the regime.

The presence of a massive Soviet arms arsenal in Libya, and the fact that al-Qadhafi has built a powerful defense line along the borders with Egypt, along with a series of air, missile and radar bases.

The Arab factors are:

The regional isolation of the Libyan regime. With the exception of Algeria, Libya's diplomatic and political relations with neighboring countries, starting with Egypt, ending with Morocco and passing through Tunisia and the Sudan, are almost frozen, or tense.

The escalating official and popular opposition in the Arab world to the regime of al-Qadhafi, except in Syria, which is in agreement with Libya for well understood reasons. al-Qadhafi finds himself scrapping with Iraq and Saudi Arabia in a propaganda war, not to speak of relations with the main current in the Palestinian resistance, which has a deep loathing for him.

The great transformation in the Arab public opinion of al-Qadhafi as a person and a ruler. His views and theories meet with a scorn mixed with ridicule in view of their haphazardness and naivety. His nervous actions and his gambles have caused many people to have doubts about the health of his mental faculties.

al-Qadhafi's open support for Khomeini's regime and his provision of moral and material support to it are something which has hurt Arab feelings, especially in Iraq and the Gulf.

The international factors are:

The increased grumbling on the part of European countries which have basic interests in west and central Africa over President al-Qadhafi's provocative policy in the region, reaching the point where that has come to exceed the Soviet or Cuban element in shaking the stability of the African regimes there, all of which are in one way or another connected to Western interests.

Western fear that al-Qadhafi's activity in Africa will be a channel in which Soviet activities will flow, as a result of the presence of a large number of Soviet and Eastern European advisors on Libyan territory.

The existence of more than one item of proof on the part of Western intelligence agencies that President al-Qadhafi is financing and training politically violent European organizations, particularly in Ireland, Italy and West Germany.

A Diversionary Alternative to Domestic Crises

In addition to that, there are "Egyptian" elements which might encourage President al-Sadat to conduct his adventures.

The Egyptian regime wants a diversionary alternative to the complex domestic and foreign political setbacks. The standard of living is growing worse as

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a result of the constant increase in prices and food bottlenecks, in spite of the relative improvement in the balance of trade.

The autonomy talks have come to a dead end and the prosperity which the regime promised the people as a result of peace with Israel has not come about.

Then there is the growing political opposition to the regime, which is encouraged in its opposition by the failure of economic policy and the failure of the Camp David agreements to provide a comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis.

In the recent period, a current which holds that war with Libya might break Egypt's Arab isolation and that the fall of al-Qadhafi as a result of Egyptian military intervention might meet with a warm reception in the Arab world has gained prominence in the narrow circle surrounding President al-Sadat.

The fact is that al-Qadhafi has now moved the ball into Egypt's goal through his direct military intervention in Chad in the past few weeks. Although Chad is not of exceptional strategic importance to Egypt, President al-Sadat does not want an African country close to Egypt to fall into the hands of a hostile regime like that in Libya.

Thus Libya's invasion of Chad constitutes "A logical excuse and legitimate justification" for Egyptian intervention, either in Chad or in Libya, in the words of a journalist close to President al-Sadat. Here it is necessary to refer to a recent statement by Lt Gen Kamal Hasan 'Ali, the foreign minister, who said "Libya now occupies part of Chad, and we are observing developments there with the utmost attention."

Kamal Hasan 'Ali's statement is noteworthy. He is one of the pillars of the regime and reflects al-Sadat's views. He is also a military man who was previously minister of defense, commander general of the (armed) forces, chief of staff and head of Military Intelligence.

Although al-Sadat has stressed more than once that he does not have "aggressive intentions" toward Libya, he is always warning "the madman of Libya," as he says, of provoking Egypt and states that he will punish him as he punished him in 1977.

Evidence of Increasing Likelihood of a Clash

A group of Egyptian moves constitutes evidence that Egypt is not ruling out a skirmish with Libya. The Egyptian forces along with the Libyan borders have been strengthened and the desert area extending from the sea to the south has been subjected to a state of emergency and military rule.

The Egyptian forces recently held military maneuvers in which aviation played a prominent part in bombing "hostile radar and missile systems bases." Helicopters also held training in bombing military convoys and supply assistance in the desert. It is well known that helicopters in desert war conditions play an exceptional reconnaissance and combat role.

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Egyptian military figures say that the Egyptian armed forces are now much better than they were in the summer of 1977 when the Egyptian-Libyan skirmishes occurred. The air force is receiving modern American and French aircraft in instalments and the land forces have been consolidated with American tanks and anti-tank missiles. Egyptian forces can operate on the western front without taking much stock of serious danger on the eastern front.

However, in the event war with Libya breaks out, will it be a border war limited to the destruction of military bases along the borders, or will the Egyptian forces invade the heartland, aiming directly at bringing the regime down?

Here military calculations and political forecasts in Cairo differ. Military figures say that Egyptian forces are able to penetrate into the Libyan heartland easily, but that would require speed in penetration and the dispersal of the Libyan forces on which al-Qadhafi basically depends to protect his regime, before international or Soviet pressure is consolidated against Egypt in order to stop its operations before bringing the regime down.

Political predictions revolve about two points. The first is the question whether the Middle East could now endure the circumstances of two local wars, the first in the Gulf, the second in the Western Desert, without having the situation explode completely and prepare the circumstances for the outbreak of a major world war.

The second point is that Egypt cannot leave the American position out of its calculations. It is understood here that Washington is passing through a state of paralysis during the period of the presidential transition which prevents it from taking a decision to support or encourage Egypt to invade Libya.

The Carter Administration, in spite of its vexation with al-Qadhafi's policies, has advised Egypt more than once not to invade Libya. The reason for that is that the United States obtains 10 percent of its foreign oil imports from Libya, which is considered America's third biggest foreign oil supplier. American companies to a large extent still monopolize the process of the production and marketing of Libyan oil, which President al-Qadhafi is careful not to infringe upon, in spite of his verbal threats.

As regards the situation in Chad, the United States, as is understood here, sympathizes with the viewpoint of Nigeria, which in turn is the biggest African country in terms of population and is America's main supplier of oil. Nigeria considers Hissein Habre, the Chad minister of defense, to be a "reble" and supports backing the "legitimate" authority of Goukouni Weddeye. However, that does not eliminate its reservations about the extension of Libyan influence into Chad.

What is Reagan's Position?

The important thing is to ascertain the position of the American president Ronald Reagan and whether he believes that the time has come for a change in Libya -- a position that sources in the Office of the Presidency in Egypt state Carter's administration holds and intended to carry out, had Carter won re-election.

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In any event, President al-Sadat has started the process of rapprochement with Reagan. He paid no heed to the recommendation to hold a trilateral summit involving Carter, Begin and him, in order to give the new president "ample time" to study the conditions in the region, then open a dialogue with him.

Egypt's American relations are founded on President al-Sadat's dictum that Egypt is to be turned into a base for American military movement in the Middle East and the Gulf; he always is calling for the consolidation of economic and political relations with America.

It appears that the United States is to a large degree responding to this viewpoint. Last year it started supplying Egypt with arms in accordance with a program which extends for 5 years and will cost \$5 billion, in addition the Americans will spend \$2 billion to develop and enlarge the Egyptian Ra's Banas base on the Red Sea.

The betting that a confrontation with Libya will occur soon increased with the influx of rapid intervention forces into Egypt starting 11 November under the guise of the conduct of joint training with Egyptian forces "for acclimatization to the weather in the Middle East."

However, these forces have hooked up with a massive Egyptian base in Cairo West -- that is, they are closer to the Libyan borders than to the Arab Gulf.

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI is baring these military secrets in American-Egyptian relations. Foremost among them is the fact that the American forces present now in Egypt will be devoting special attention to improving the combat capability of Egyptian forces in desert conditions.

The United States also asked Egypt to permit it to establish an air base in the Marsa Matruh area near Libya. The United States wants to use this base as a takeoff point for radar surveillance aircraft in the southern Mediterranean and the north African and southern Sahara area.

From time to time, since last January, AWACS early-warning radar airplanes have been taking off from Egyptian bases; these are in charge of air surveillance and observation activities.

A number of confrontations have occurred between Libyan and American aircraft in international waters which Libya considers part of its territorial waters in the Gulf of Sirte. Most of the American planes observing the situation there take off from Egyptian territory.

All these circumstances and items of evidence give Cairo the hunch that something is on the verge of happening between Egypt and Libya. But can the prediction be believed?

The answer is that it is necessary to wait awhile to determine whether al-Sadat's inspiration of leadership responds to the "objective" circumstances which would encourage the performance of some operation against Libya.

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POSSIBILITIES, OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRACY EXPLORED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 28 Nov-4 Dec, 5-11 Dec 80

/Article: "The Arab Journey To Defeat: The Tribulations of Democracy in the Arab Nation"7

/28 Nov-4 Dec 80 pp 16-19/

/Text/ It might be out of place to talk about democracy in the conditions the Arab world is going through nowadays. In fact, the appeal to let the seedling of democracy breathe, live and grow may be a sort of distraction or a cry in the desert, in the midst of these undemocratic forms and circumstances.

However, it would not be bad for us to draw both ourselves and our attention to the gloomy circumstances, and let us try, if only for a short moment, to concentrate on the cause of democracy, seizing the opportunity of the convening of the symposium on "problems of democracy in the Arab nation" in Morocco.

It is sad that the Arab press, while finding itself an excuse to evade confronting repressive and brutal regimes, has not covered this important symposium. It is as if even talking about democracy in general in the newspapers has become a forbidden and proscribed thing in the dictionaries of those who control the press.

Before we talk about the quest for democracy, it is necessary for us to talk about the lack and absence of it, or let us say its forced exile. Here we face a group of reasons and circumstances which have all helped to crush the democratic experience in the Arab world in its cradle.

First there is the responsibility of a generation of leaders who led the national struggle for independence. To a large extent this generation, in spite of its high praise for Western democracy at the time, was not able, in the rapture of the triumph over colonialism, to be tolerant and allow the presence of a lawful opposition in the context of the regime and its constitutional institutions. When it was tolerant of that, it had previously guaranteed legislation and a monopoly over power for itself which would protect it from the fangs and dangers of the opposition.

The regime of Bisharah al-Khuri and Riyad al-Sulh tolerated opposition to some extent by virtue of the circumstances of the factional equation in Lebanon, but it was not able to control itself in the face of the enticements of power and administrative corruption. The regime of Shukri al-Quwwatli and Jamil Mardum in Syria

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was, in spite of its sagacity, deficient in accepting the aspirations of a broad generation of politicians and cultured persons firmly linked to vital segments of peasants, students and workers in such a politicized society as Syria's.

Thus there was a relative democracy allied with the domestic bourgeoisie, relatively acceptable in comparison with the circumstances today but subject to the whims of the rulers and perversion of the electoral will at the ballot box.

Rounding out the tragedy of the democratic experiment was the fact that the majority of the masses concerned were absent from the conscious exercise of democracy and adherence to its basic rights and freedoms — indeed the readiness to die for its sake — because of fatalism, illiteracy, backwardness, poverty and long oppression.

The situation was hopeless as long as the policeman or security officer in the rural areas or the remote governorates who was the "official" agent of the representative of feudalism or the authorities would guide the voters to the polling places, choose candidates for them, then collect their stamps on the ballots.

To that one should add a lack of democratic education which the young generations and vital segments of the society could have acquired on behalf of freedom and democracy. Democracy is not, as some people believe, just a constitution, juridical provisions, statutes, bills and articles. It is first and last traditions and usage, practice, experience, expertise, education, environment and atmosphere.

Here, in the absence of a democratic education, the responsibility lies on the shoulders of a broad generation of cultured persons and intellectuals — we could almost say teachers and instructors — who have not been very interested in spreading about and disseminating the belief in democracy and freedom in the spirits of the young and the new generations of students, workers and peasants.

The emphasis in the political media mobilization of the masses has been placed on exposing the corruption of the government and the administration and exaggerating it to the point of defaming the fledgling experiment in democracy, so that among the general masses democracy, because of its liberalism, laxness and permissiveness, has been linked to corruption, indeed has unfortunately been considered the proper environment for the growth of corruption in all its administrative and political forms.

Democracy has unfairly been made to bear the responsibility for the emergence of a big embezzler, a serious gangster, a cunning spy or a criminal mocking security and order.

Indeed, more serious than that, the responsibility for the extremism of certain religious or racial minorities in demanding rights or privileges which existing regimes, because of their weakness, were not able to respond to, has been hung on the "clothes rack" of democracy.

The absence of masses sensitive to the cause of democracy has been synonymous with the absence of big popular parties which were vigilant about democracy.

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The absence of these parties has made one miss the opportunity to give the legislative institution and the executive and political authorities a firm harmonious form. Thus parliaments or regimes have been amorphous malleable forms containing a mixture of strong personalities, traditional leaders and tribal powers which gathered together or split up over personal alliances and selfish interests, so that it has been impossible for the opposition or the masses to determine who was responsible for political or economic guidance or good or bad conduct.

It is painful that with very limited exceptions the Arab nation is still lacking in parties with clear, specific principles and programs, parties with bases which push renewed blood up from the base to the summit in the form of ideas and leaders in a natural democratic flow, so that the banner will always be borne by young leaders experienced in ruling, opposition and democratic methods.

Local or domestic circumstances which have contributed to eliminating the democratic experiment cannot in any event be separated from foreign factors and influences which also have had a role in committing aggression against fledgling Arab democracy after independence or after the formation of the state in Arab societies in its modern sense.

Anyone reading secret documents in the archives of the British, French and American foreign ministries or the memoirs of agents of these countries' espionage services will realize that Western democracy was never a commodity for export to the third world, including the Arab world.

Western policies, with all their influence, roles, experience and agents have worked to bring Arab democracy down without pity or mercy and encourage adventurers to take power and establish dictatorships which have been strong on the surface but brittle in nature and found no shelter from popular reactions except by relying on foreign forces in exchange for guarding and guaranteeing these forces' interests in the Arab nation.

The charter of the CIA, for instance, forbids the exercise of any activity within the United States, because its role is limited to gathering information and organizing the affairs of the world in accordance with the Protestant Christian view, a view which allowed the Dulles brothers, Johnson and Nixon to arrange and hatch "dirty operations" against all the "satanic" regimes in the third world which differed with this "protestant" view in looking at interests and positions.

American hypocrisy reached its peak when President Carter came and imposed himself as a protector of "human rights" without cleaning his own hands by directing self-criticism against the "free" conscience of America, which has permitted the crushing of democratic forces and regimes in the third world.

It is true that dealing with dictatorial regimes which are strong in appearance but malleable in nature has in the short term made it easy for the West to guarantee its interests and monopolies in the third world, but in the long run the West has begun to reap what its hands have wrought against democracies in the third world.

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The dictatorship of generals allied with Washington started to open the way for other dictatorships which were more vicious and terrible in their dealings with peoples and also with the West.

The Soviets have become proficient at the principles of the game. Today they install dictatorships on their behalf or cooperate with or assimilate dictatorships under their brilliant economic and social slogans.

Thus it is out of the question for instance to compare the dictatorial practices of President Abid al-Shishaki with those of the regimes of President Hafiz al-Asad or President Mu-ammr al-Qadhafi. These regimes in turn have become proficient in the art of the game and have through the instinct for survival become impelled to move skilfully through the networks of the two big powers' intertwined interests in the world.

The Soviets' responsibility for supporting or coopting non-popular dictatorships and regimes in the third world is in no way less than that of the West, but the Arab democratic forces are comforted by the fact that the Soviet Union is not likely to say much in defense of freedom and democracy as long as these attributes are imprisoned within the frameworks of classic communism in the Soviet nation itself.

Israel Is a Threat to Arab Democracy

The establishment of Israel in the heart of the Arab nation was a negation of all possibilities for the establishment of democracy, especially in the surrounding countries.

The circumstances of defeat charged the Arab atmosphere with tension, bitterness and a violent popular desire to seek revenge against those responsible for the successive defeats. This desire was countered by the regimes' recourse to repression and brutality to conceal their deficiencies and their responsibility in fashioning the defeat.

Thus, while in the Zionist state democracy, regardless of its narrowness or breadth, is growing, permitting the press and the Israelis to hold those responsible for shortcomings in the 1973 war to account, democracy in Syria, Egypt and elsewhere has fled and collapsed.

Isn't it scandalous that a nation of 150 million people has not yet read so much as one strategic book setting out in detail and objectivity the reasons and the responsibility for the military defeat of 1956 and 1967?

The state of war with Israel has been a permanent cause for the implementation of exceptional laws and provisions, the establishment of state security courts and the arbitrary and capricious imprisonments which have been imposed for decades.

These Janissary laws have succeeded in splitting the spirit from the body of peoples who are supposed to stand up, resist, and fight occupation, settlement and expansion, without, however, talking, protesting, discussing or participating themselves in government in their own countries.

Nonetheless, one of these exceptional laws and cases which have brought disaster upon Arab spirits and dignity prevented one spy like Cohen from making a mockery of security in the Arab nation.

Yes, military dictatorship has not prevented espionage. Perhaps it was significant that the wierd judge Salah al-Dali, who tried Cohen, was one of his friends in glorious nights of intimacy, and that his other friend, George Salim Sayf, was government censor of the Syrian press. However, Salah, like Sammar Cohen, has not yet dared say anything in the highest positions of power about what he spontaneously and naively related at these pleasant soirees about the secrets of power to the spy, who by that time had become almost a leading comrade in the party.

One of the excuses which Kissinger and other Western mediators and messengers have used to justify themselves before the Arabs is that democracy in the Zionist state prevents successive Israeli governments from adopting unpopular decisions which involve "concessions" to the Arabs, while the Arabs can offer concessions to Israel because they have absolute power and do not fear a popular opposition in their countries.

By this logic, President al-Sadat was dragged to Jerusalem to bow his head in submission before the plaque commemorating the Israeli war dead, present a treaty for separate peace with the enemy to the "Egyptian People's Assembly," then present it to the people in a referendum whose results were known beforehand.

Why not? Because of the absence of democracy, the honorable assembly members, whom Nasir's regime had signed over to that of al-Sadat, and whom the National Party had inherited from the central platform and the Socialist Union, do not represent the conscience of the Egyptian people, who are committed to the security, peace and struggle of their Arab nation -- they represent the conscience of the regime, which is capable of shifting its allegiance in the twinkling of an eye, without fear of being held accountable or interrogated, from the trench of confrontation to a tourist hotel in Hertzlia.

It is truly gloomy and dreary, the democracy of the rapid shift which President al-Sadat is pleased to talk about in his eloquent lisp and which the other Arab regimes boast of.

The causes for the coup de grace against Arab democracy are complemented by the role military men have played in politics. The defeat by Israel was not sufficient to concentrate military efforts in plugging up the gaps in the Arab defense -- instead of that, the military men, defeated in war, turned the artillery away from the borders to threaten the capitals and steal power and authority in the dark of night.

In Syria, alone, the army men attached Damascus from the front, bringing regimes there down nine times in 20 years. This is what the commonly known history claims. However, the secret history of coups in this miserable country claims that there were dozens of coups and thousands of people in gold braid who thought about or made attempts which did not succeed or remained secret. It became a tradition in the Syria of the fifties and sixties for an officer to think of a coup if he had

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a tank company close to the ill-fated capital in order to threaten the regime there or invade it and read art. Communiqué Number One, which a clique of friends and adventurers had prepared for him.

However, the strangest coup was the one led by the officer Haydar al-Kuzbari, who drank a number of glasses of whiskey until a late hour at night at the Officers' Club, emerged staggering in diligent camouflage then went directly to the camel riders' units (the desert guard) in order to invade Damascus and bring down the government of Nasir and the union with rusted-out armor that went back to the thirties.

al-Kuzbari and Nasir are two examples of military men who were brave in their studies and long-range thinking. Here it is sufficient to say that al-Kuzbari and his clique struck out at the union state on grounds of the lack of democracy and Egyptian domination.

All al-Kuzbari received in his classes in the form of heavy doses of belief in Arab unity and nationalism did not, during the hours of vigor and wantonness, prevent a blow against the great hopes of the Arabs.

It was lost on him that the struggle for the sake of democracy must occur within the framework of the union state; the establishment of dictatorship in Cairo should not call for Damascus to secede from it, just as the establishment of dictatorship in Damascus does not justify the crime of Aleppo's seceding from that.

When al-Kuzbari's colleagues sensed the burden of what their hands had wrought, they went to Nasir beseeching forgiveness and pardon and showing their readiness to rejoin what had been severed. However, Nasir's military pride prevented him from regaining by a military coup a country which had gone by military coup.

While al-Kuzbari, in his introversion and narrowmindedness, was a "model" example of a military person, Nasir was an amazing example of a military man with broad vision and grasp. However, the two, by virtue of the military education, were deficient in understanding and assimilating the value of democracy.

Nasir's popularity, dominance of the masses in Egypt and the Arab world, sagacity, competence and political talent were sufficient to permit him, especially after the Suez war or the announcement of the union with Syria, to establish a democratic presidential system.

Democracy, with its parties, its press, and its opposition would not have posed a danger to Nasir and his regime. One opposition vote case in an Egyptian-Syrian "People's Assembly" meeting in Cairo or Damascus would have been better, and would have been a warning surpassing in importance and benefit, the hundreds of agency reports Nasir exerted himself over in the evenings and wasted his life reading. Nonetheless, these reports did not prevent a drunken officer from bringing down the union in 1961, nor did they prevent the bosom friend of his life, Field Marshal 'Amir, from creating the biggest causes of the defeat in 1967.

It was inevitable, understandable and logical that the military institution should grow, especially in countries confronting Israel, and become an illegitimate state

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within legitimate states. However, this growth was at the expense of democracy, whose termination and strangulation the military men, starting with al-Kuzbari, ending with Nasir and proceeding through Qasim and al-Qadhdhafi, spared no effort in completing.

The Responsibility of Nationalist Forces

Then there is also the responsibility of the Arab nationalist forces. The internecine struggle and infighting among these political forces was a grievous blow to the Arab masses, because, if these forces had joined forces, more than they separated, there would have been no justification for infighting and liquidations.

When these forces ruled, they could not, because of the proliferation of wings within them, because of opposition from other national forces on the political street, and because of their alliances with groups of adventurers in the military organization, establish democratic regimes.

A more calamitous and bitter deviation occurred in the composition of some of these ruling forces. Their isolation from the masses and the proliferation of power centers within them compelled them to seek non-democratic means to preserve their personal rule and gains. There was a regression for example in Syria into factional introversion. In Libya, the regime resorted to breaking up all the institutions which it felt might constitute a danger to it. In South Yemen, the regime delivered itself and its head to foreign influence along with all the bases, facilities and dominance the foreign influence required.

The introversion of these regimes and their permanent evasion of the democratic alternative ultimately made them look for foreign alternatives which would back them up in their desperate struggle to survive in power.

Isn't it a tribulation for the regime in Syria, for example, after 17 years of survival in power -- during which it has come into possession of all the party, political, cultural, media, school and university equipment and implements -- that the generation it raised should be the generation of the Moslem Brothers? Isn't it a tribulation for the regime that it should deal with the generation it raised in the language of blood, lead, assassination and extermination?

The tribulation in reality is not Syria's alone. In the last analysis, it is the tribulation of the Arab regimes, foremost among them the nationalist ones.

The responsibility of the marxist or radical regimes, or those which have relinquished their national line to follow the marxist platform, is no less than that of the national forces in failing to seek recourse in the democratic alternative. These forces say nothing about the cause of democracy. They fight existing regimes but do not talk in detail about their view and vision of democracy -- assuming that these forces believe in democracy at all.

Here it is necessary, out of fairness to these forces, to say that their criteria of democracy are different from Western criteria. Democracy, to them, may be restricted to an elite or vanguard which must lead, guide and rule -- democracy, to them, is the "dictatorship of the proletariat," the dictatorship of the working class which works, produces and consequently must rule.

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However, no matter what the differences in interpretation and definition of the notion and form of democracy might be, that does not excuse the deficiency of these forces and parties in asserting the notion of freedom in Arab society. It is unfortunate that most of these "progressive" forces are today supporting the most ferocious dictatorial regimes in the Arab world.

In fact, the historic leadership of a "radical" party like the Syrian Communist Party found no embarrassment in having the members of its political bureau place their imprimatur on a "eulogy" for 'Abd-al-Karim al-Jundi, one of the most vicious intelligence agency heads Syria has known, when he committed suicide a few days before the coup which brought President al-Asad to the summit of power in 1970. After that, Mr. Khalid Bakrash /sic/, secretary general of the party, found no contradiction in sitting down at a table including the members of the token "National Progressive Front" which President al-Asad is pleased to summon from time to time, to be guided by its advice on issues and matters on which he had already made up his mind.

If the radical or leftist parties bear part of the responsibility for the stifling of the democratic experiment, the forces of the right also must explicitly state their position on the issue of democracy.

The Moslem Brothers, who are still playing an effective role under the political surface in more than one Arab country, have said nothing frank about democracy. In fact, they are still evading obvious questions about their movement, their behavior and their plans. Some of them even refuse to admit that they are a political movement, organization or political party. Some of them view other parties and organizations with the hostile view "whoever is not with us is against us."

The gravity of the tendency toward political violence in the ranks of the movement, or the exploitation of the reservoir of religious enthusiasm among the masses, is no less than that of the lack of clarity in defining political identity or the position on democracy. This ambiguity will be negatively reflected on the Arab masses' position on the brothers, who must themselves specify in a clear, obvious fashion their position and place on the Arab political stage.

In the course of the discussion on the positions of Arab political organizations and parties, on the issue of democracy, it is necessary to address oneself to the position of the Palestinian revolution on it as well.

One might say that the logic on the rifle does not coincide with the logic of democracy. However, the rifle is pointed basically at the usurping enemy. Stressing democracy must be the Palestinian revolution's path toward the hearts and minds of the silent majority in the Arab world which is fundamentally its true buttress in its struggle and battle and in its confrontation with the conspiracy against it.

Every bullet fired at the enemy must be accompanied by a deepening of democratic interaction among all the detachments of the Palestinian resistance, in spite of their different political and ideological affiliations and connections. The more democratic, sound and proper the dialogue among the detachments of the resistance is, the more the status of the rifle and the revolution will be consolidated in Arab public opinion.

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In fact, the main current in the Palestinian resistance movement -- we mean the FATH current -- must struggle for the sake of consolidating the trend toward democracy in the Arab world. If there had been real democracy in Egypt, al-Sadat would not have dared try to solve Egypt's cause at the expense of the cause of Palestine.

More than that, the Palestinian resistance's heart must open up to all open criticism directed against it in the Arab world, whether issued by an official or popular body. Criticism alone can correct the course of the bullet and make it set off toward its sole target, the enemy.

Following this review of the causes, influences and elements which have played their part in bringing down democracy in the Arab world, it is necessary to talk about ways to restore democracy, or, more explicitly, to put the Arabs on the thousand-mile road toward democracy. Let us see whether it is possible to establish a true Arab democracy, and how; will the issue of democracy outstrip the issue of unity in the national concern?

This all will require another frank analytical stand regarding the trial of democracy in the Arab nation. Let us once again say that this might not be the time and the circumstance for this discussion; however, the absence of democracy is basically one of the causes of the perverse circumstances the Arab world is going through. Therefore, to talk about democracy is to deal with the essence and is not separable from dealing with the Arab issues of the hour.

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/Text/ This is the second and final instalment of "The Arabs' Journey to Defeat," in the context and circumstances of the trials of democracy in their greater nation. The first instalment analyzed the causes of the fall of democracy and disclosed the forces hostile to it and their role in conspiring against its predominance. In this instalment AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI investigates the possibilities of establishing democracy and its constitutional and political form, and seeks the forces which might constitute a guarantee for its survival and guard over it.

Can democracy be established and breathe in the context of the regimes existing in the Arab world today?

That is a difficult question which the political analyst asks of himself, but it is necessary to confront it, because it is out of the question to talk about democracy without taking the powers which rule and govern into consideration; otherwise, the talk will be just smoke in the air, a theoretical or academic investigation which is not linked by any ties to the reality which exists on the map or in the real world.

From the outset it is necessary to concede in advance that there is no hope of establishing any form of democracy, in its form as an instrument for expressing opinions, in the context of specific regimes, in South Yemen, for instances, where half the population has fled, or in Libya, where president al-Qadhafi considers parliamentary representation to be a fraud and the mere establishment of parties treason.

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This does not mean that one should give a certificate of innocence to other regimes. However, there are regimes which possess the basic qualifications to take large steps toward democracy. Morocco is considered a model of a regime which is being gradually transformed, in a noteworthy manner which merits study, from introversion to liberalization.

In this Arab country today there are political parties and bodies, a free press, and strong unions. King Hasan the Second himself has not been slow to encourage this tendency — in fact he is requesting the people in the Sahara to join the parties in existence in the north and also have newspapers which will express their opinions just like newspapers in the north.

In Tunisia, President Bourguiba's regime is oriented toward liberalism. Even in Algeria there are encouraging first signs in the context of the presidency of Chadli Bendjedid.

In the Arab East, there are palpable deliberate steps toward democracy in Iraq, perhaps in Jordan and Kuwait, and even in Saudi Arabia, in spite of the atmosphere charged with tension as a result of the Camp David agreements and the chaos of the Iranian revolution.

In Syria the situation is hopeless. In Egypt the regime is not democratic but, in comparison with the regime in Syria or Libya, al-Sadat is scoring more than one point on his behalf. AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has perhaps been the harshest Arab journal in criticising the Camp David platform and the deviation of the Egyptian regime from the national path, but AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI has enough courage to say that al-Sadat's regime is more liberal and open than many of the regimes which criticize him.

In Egypt, the opponents do not go to the gallows. In Egypt, there is one or more opposition party newspaper. Meanwhile, the parties of the "National Front" in Syria, in the course of 10 years, have failed to issue even one common newspaper speaking in their name, although the constitution of the front grants these parties that right.

Perhaps the liberal elements of al-Sadat's regime are intentional and deliberate, to prove that the separate peace with Israel, and the establishment of relations with it and the United States, also mean tolerance of some political liberalization which is not present in most existing Arab regimes, in the intention to lead the silent Arab majority which rejects the Camp David platform but at the same time is staggering under the burden of undemocratic circumstances astray and cause it despair.

Monarchies Do Not Prevent the Establishment of Democracy

In the forties and fifties the belief was prevalent that the monarchical system was an obstacle to the establishment of democracy and that the mere fall of monarchies would automatically mean the establishment of democratic regimes.

Bitter experience has proved the error of this belief. The fall of the monarchy in Egypt in 1952 paved the way for the establishment of social democracy, that is,

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an attempt to redistribute wealth among the population in a fair manner and mobilize production in service of the national economy. However, political democracy simply did not accompany social democracy.

In Iraq, 'Abd-al-Karim Qasim's regime was not just a war against democracy — with its minority elements it was a strong blow at Arab nationalist forces. In fact, the republic of the 'Arif brothers, which did not fall short of Qasim's regime in its non-Arab estrangement, placed itself in a dilemma which reached the point of armed clash with the Ba'th Party, the main national party in Iraq.

In Libya, the jamahiriya of the Green Book openly rejects all the forms of democracy in the world which were implicitly rejected by the Senussi monarchy.

Thus the republics have not proved that they are more democratic or more effectively prepared and determined to accept democracy than the monarchies.

What is said about democracy can be said also about unity. The establishment of republics has not paved the way for the establishment of unity, the Arab's national hope. Qasim struck down the national forces and made alliance with the British and the Communists to resist Iraq's headlong rush to join the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1958 and 1959.

al-Qadhafi's jamahiriya has been unsuccessful in establishing unity with Egypt, the Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria and Malta, respectively, and will fail to establish it with Syria. The fall of the monarchy in North Yemen has not brought about unity with South Yemen even though 18 years have elapsed since the republic was established in San'a'.

The purpose in talking about unity here is not to defend monarchies but rather to say that there is no hope of establishing democracy in the Arab nation without establishing unity — and conversely, as the union between Egypt and Syria proved, there is no hope of a lasting union without democracy.

This notion was lost on Presidents al-Asad and al-Qadhafi when they announced their plans for union, although every Syrian criticism of the union with Egypt was based on the fact that democracy was lacking in the union.

Unity and democracy are two interconnected things. Amazingly, a wise traditional politician like Dr Nazim al-Qudsi realized that in the forties; when he was given the opportunity to head the Syrian cabinet for a short period in the early fifties, he carried about a draft constitution for the establishment of a federal democratic union which he took about with him to the Arab capitals.

Nazim al-Qudsi committed a big mistake when he accepted what his close companion and friend Rushdi al-Kikhiya rejected: ten years later he agreed to head the Syrian secessionist republic. However, al-Qudsi will go down in history not as a premier of the succession but as one of the pioneers of Arab unity.

The reader may be amazed by this description of al-Qudsi the secessionist, who has been shrouded in oblivion although he is still alive and earning a living. However, the fact is that that Syrian politician realized, at the peak of his maturity,

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that strengthening democracy in Syria would take place through the attainment of a form of Arab unity.

This principle, which al-Quidsi, graduate of Lausanne University in Switzerland, discovered, is still true 30 or 40 years later. Democracy cannot be established in Iraq, the Gulf of Jordan if there is a dictatorship in Syria, and the opposite is true.

Democracy, by the nature of its institutions, its concepts, its persons, its councils and its political figures, does not possess the absolute powers and authorities, security service, and intelligence organizations which undemocratic regimes possess.

The tragedy of Lebanon is embodied in the fact that the weak, idiotic factional democracy there was not able to persevere in the face of the struggle among Arab regimes on its territory. The force of the Second Bureau (the intelligence agency) which roamed about at will in the era of al-Shihab in the sixties, did not resemble or equal a single security agency of the network of security agencies in al-Asad's Syria or 'Abd-al-Nasir's Egypt.

Thus it is impossible in the practical sense to turn a single Arab country into an independent laboratory for the democratic experiment, because this Arab world, in spite of all the efforts, barriers and laws which limit the freedom of movement and transfer from one of its parts to another and prevent the exchange of newspapers, publications and ideas among countries, is an inseparable whole: what happens in Saudi Arabia affects what happens in Syria, Jordan, or even Algeria and Morocco. And the converse is also true.

The Unity State is Tolerant with Its Masses

It is not an exaggeration to say that the attainment of Arab unity is one of the conditions for the attainment of democracy. The unity state, in spite of its extensive area, can deal tolerantly, generously, broadmindedly and magnanimously with its masses. The unity state can solve the problems of racial and religious minorities and guarantee their rights to retain their traditions, heritage and language and exercise their beliefs in freedom, and appeal to them to contribute their share and their part to the authority and legislation.

A regime in any small country, even if it is democratic, possesses a large amount of touchiness which makes it tense and nervous in dealing with domestic and national issues.

Meanwhile, the Arab unity state, or Arab federal state, would possess sufficient self-confidence and strength to allow any racial or religious minority to present its demands openly, even if these demands reached the point of secession.

There is no fear over this in the context of a democratic state covering a broad area. The central authorities in India treat the regional and racial issue with a large degree of toleration; the central authorities in Canada have permitted the French province of Quebec to hold a referendum to determine whether to stay in the federation or secede. Rene Levesque, the leader of Quebec, has not been considered a traitor, has not been brought to trial, and has not been executed;

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he is still a leader of Quebec and a premier there, because the central powers, in an atmosphere of democracy, have enough scope of vision and wisdom to permit its citizens to determine whether they want to be citizens or not -- that is, democracy, without touchiness, has allowed its citizens to infringe on the most sacred of objects, the unity of national soil. All sacred objects collapse before the sacred object of democracy, before the sanctity of free opinions, before the predominance of the value of thought and intelligence.

Yes, Arab unity, even a federal union, is unfeasible, if not impossible, in the current circumstances of fragmentation and internecine fighting. However, this does not mean one should not make the attempt. The Amman summit conference was a suitable opportunity to dispel the atmosphere of tension, and in fact, had intentions been pure, it would perhaps have been a starting point or preparatory step toward some unificationist or federal action which would gradually have taken the place of the Arab League, on grounds that all the previous summit conferences, contrary to Syria's view, have been positive turning points toward mutual understanding and coordination.

A quick glance at the geographical, political, human and social map of the "Arab nation" is sufficient to divide it into draft units or federations which can prepare a suitable climate for the growth of democracy.

Iraq, Syria and Jordan constitute a harmonious human, political and economic whole and consequently offer an opportunity for the establishment of a constitutional federal union based on democracy. This federation can exempt the existing regimes from the causes of domestic tension and can provide a human arsenal, strategic heartland and massive resources for confronting Israel. Democracy can be the guarantee and the element of balance which will ensure the confidence and trust of the regimes in power.

The monarchy in Jordan will not be obstructed by the establishment of a harmonious federation. The king in Amman is like the president in Baghdad or Damascus -- he is a ruler, the head of the executive authority, and the person daily responsible, by virtue of the current situation, for running everyday affairs. The federal constitution can guarantee the continuation of the current domestic format of rule, since the federation will not enter into the minutiae of details in any of the three countries but will be oriented toward defense, diplomatic and economic coordination and toward guaranteeing the genesis of sound, proper democracy.

The call to establish a federal union among Iraq, Jordan and Syria is not just a spontaneous national yearning for union -- it is a realistic call based on the abovementioned foundations, and, if the circumstances developing in Syria prevent its attainment now, they are certainly exceptional transitory circumstances for which a solution, perhaps a rapid solution, must be provided someday.

What is said about the call for a federal union among these three countries can be said about the call for a federal union in the Gulf which will compromise Saudi Arabia and the states of the emirates. Nor is that a strange call -- the federation will be a constitutional consecration of a situation which exists now, that of political -- we almost say economic -- consultation and coordination among these countries under Saudi leadership.

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Egypt, the Sudan and Libya provide reasonable bases for the establishment of a federal union; the same is true among the three countries of the Maghreb -- Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, and perhaps Mauritania as well.

These federations will not necessarily be consecrations of the regimes. The democratic constitutional format will guarantee the gradual development of these regimes, the expansion and broadening of their popular bases, and the participation of the greatest possible amount of mass segments in the regimes which have so far kept aloof from participating in the process of fashioning their present and future and their political and social decisions.

These federations will not just prepare the suitable atmosphere for democracy -- they will also be a preparatory step to a greater unity which time might sooner or later allow to be attained.

The Democracy of the Presidential System

This has concerned the form or framework in which the democratic Arab state can be formulated. However, democracy, as we said in the last issue, still is an elastic, flexible word which is subject to legal, juridical, constitutional and ideological interpretations. Consequently the dispute over these interpretations will cause the Arabs to be lost, as they were lost in their dispute over unity or socialism.

Democracy, in King Husayn's view, is different from that of 'Abd-al-Fattah Isma'il, al-Qadhdhafi or Salih Yahyawil. Western democracy is different from that in China, the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.

To resolve these interpretations, let us state, in simplified fashion, that the requisite democracy is a parliamentary or representative democracy which relies on a strong presidential system. The fifth republic of France is a fit model for the Arab democracy desired. There are two vital legislative councils and strong parties. However, De Gaulle gave the presidency strong powers which enabled him to pursue the process of flexibly forging political decisions without turning the president into a dictator with absolute powers.

The presidential system is not the preferred format, but in the first stage it will be necessary because the Arabs cannot shift from their current condition to a completely democratic situation in one stroke. The regimes are pressed against beneath the surface by hundreds of explosive problems, and merely removing the cover is enough to set off all the contradictions in them and constitute a lethal cancerous fabric on the surface of the frail skin of democracy.

Iran is a vivid example. The Shah's regime was an iron lid on a boiling, blazing mass in which there was an odd mixture of social, economic, political, racial and religious issues and problems. When the lid was raised the explosion occurred. Khomeyni's democracy is a frail fabric in the gusts of wind, on its edges.

No regime, whatever its nature and intentions, can constitute a guard or guarantor of democracy. The real guarantee of freedom is democratic power -- by which we mean political parties, popular, trade union and professional organizations, and the press.

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The democracy needed is not the traditional democracy of the thirties or forties in Egypt and Iraq, the democracy of the fifties in Syria, the democracy of the sixties in Lebanon; democracy is not flabby political and social forces allied with the palace, the regime or the foreign forces. Democracy is not obsolete power, feudalism or capital, prominent persons, chieftains, or aristocratic families.

The Alliance of the Middle and Working Classes

The democracy which is required must be expressive and representative of the new forces in society — the thinking, effective, working and productive forces. In other words, it is, specifically, the democracy of the middle class in alliance with the working class.

This statement might be alien to theoretical and ideological premises in its view of the social struggle, or new as regards what is said in the books, publications, press and publications of the radical forces in the Arab world, which have promoted what are known as popular or mass democracies or the dictatorship of the proletariat. No such democracies exist today in the Arab world; while there are regimes which bear these descriptions and names, a quick reading of their internal conditions will show how great the split is between the "popular" authorities and the people, between the "mass" authorities and the masses. In brief they are a democracy which is restricted to a narrow group or a petty clique dominating power with their agencies and repression, not their ready or innovative theories or their broad popular bases.

The ideological standard does not eliminate the existing state of affairs. Today there is an invisible alliance between the middle and working classes in the Arab world. This unnoticed alliance is pressing with tremendous force against the existing political forms, expressing itself, its view and its interests in the context of power and legislation.

There is a broad current of technocrats who plan the economy and manage industrial organizations, intellectuals, people in white collars (employees and functionaries in the public and private sectors), small craftsmen and merchants who represent domestic capitalism, and blue collar workers. These all make up the unnoticed alliance on whose shoulders economic and social change in the past 30 years has lain. They all make up the effective, motive force in society, not the working class alone, as people with radical theories are claiming.

How great and strange appears the contradiction when we find that the radicals, who today are presiding over political organizations calling for the establishment of the power of the proletariat, are all, except for a few, people from the middle class, while the working class, for the most part, offers its labors for work and production while its guiding orienting thought is only in theories.

This alliance constitutes a social fabric which provides stability and relieves the storms of explosion, tension and social struggle. While the working and middle classes are able to establish this alliance in the context of work and production, the democracy that is to be hoped for must be expressive of the alliance in the context of power or the opposition.

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Party organizations are the vehicle which will absorb the political forces of these allied or interconnected social forces, and democracy must pave the way for the establishment of free trade unions or vocational organizations chosen by workers and employees far removed from the directives of intelligence officers. All these organizations must be vital, effective, conscious and able to protect and watch over democracy.

To emphasize this alliance which exists between the middle and working classes is not an "impudent" aggression, as the radical observers may call it, against the ideological standard which separates classes and makes struggle among them inevitable, or opposes the alliance with permanent propaganda and publicity.

Even if this alliance between the two classes did not exist, it is the task of the parties and trade unions in the circumstances of democracy to work and struggle to establish it and consolidate it, to guarantee political stability and the continuity of work and production, and to implant social peace and protect democracy itself.

However, what is the position of military men on Arab democracy?

The intense loathing with the forces of technocracy, intellectuals and other democratic forces in Arab society harbor toward military men must not rule out the acknowledgement that the military institution has a role, a place and status in a democratic state. Perhaps giving military men the right to vote -- indeed giving them the right to send representatives to the legislative institutions and the executive power -- will express an actual fact, as embodied in the effective role of the military institution in Arab political life.

Perhaps giving military men this constitutional role will help reduce the illegitimate role they are playing today in the context of power and politics, indeed may dispel the desire among adventurous military persons to trespass against democracy or overthrow its regimes by force.

The Principle of Separation of Powers and Independence of the Judiciary

Legal surveillance over the course of the constitutional process and the democratic game must be undertaken by a number of totally independent institutions. First there is administrative and financial accountability, which assumes surveillance over public funds, in order to ensure that they are not infringed or squandered, or wasted on services which do not conform to the public interest, constitutional morality or democracy, not to speak about human morality.

Second there is the need to rely on the principle of the separation of the three powers. In this sphere it is necessary to stress the absolute independence of the judiciary. This independence invests judges and men of the law with dignity, increases their confidence in themselves and their consciences, and makes of their higher institutions an honest reference source for the application of the constitution and laws, their application and the expansion of individual juridical judgment in their field.

Democracy without an independent judiciary is a forest without a guard. The yearning of judges and men of the law always naturally strives toward democracy;

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enjoyment by the lawyers' unions in the Arab world of independence and a distinctive trade union and professional personality will enable them to play their role of giving warning to the political and executive powers. Putting the head and members of the council of the Federation of Lawyers' Unions in Syria in prison just for demanding the return of democracy and the abrogation of state security courts, traditional courts and exceptional laws is something one cannot be silent about.

Most lawyers who have been lodged as guests in dungeons have not previously engaged in political activity and the recommendations they presented constituted a compromise solution to the dilemma of the regime in its estrangement from its citizens. However, the arrogance which dominates spirits always prevents a response to the logic of the mind and wisdom.

It is painful that the voice of the men of the law in the Arab world, and the whole world, has not been raised to help the Syrian men of the law in their tribulations, and that adequate pressure has not been exerted on President al-Asad's regime to release them; that has made it easy for the regime to dissolve the elected councils for the lawyers' unions with the stroke of a pen to draw up unions of representatives of the authorities and the Communists cooperating with them with the stroke of another pen.

This has all happened with the knowledge, understanding and endorsement of a man named 'Abd-al-Ra'uf al-Kasim, who, when he assumed the premiership, gave the good news that his would be a government of domestic relaxation and a barrier standing in the way of transgressions and aggression against laws and statutes.

In any event, the loss of freedoms by a handful of men of the law does not equal the regime's loss of a strong, effective and forceful class of people represented by the prisoners, a class of cultivated liberal groups which stood with concern for the nation against political violence in the street and violence by the authorities up to the day of arrest. Their vanguard's presentation of legal advice to the regime was a criterion of the latter's ability to respond flexibly to a group which did not bear arms, engage in assassination, demonstrate in the streets or even enlist itself in and be totally absorbed in political action. The violent response by the authorities to the demands of the men of the law moved this social class, with all its effective influential weight, to the ranks of the opposition, increasing the alienation and isolation of the regime and its dilemma before itself and the democratic forces in the Arab world.

The press also has a role in the process of building democracy. The press is the salt of democracy and gives it a flavor distinguishing it from dictatorship, which sees in the media only a trumpet which ridicules it.

While the regimes must provide a climate of freedom for the press, the press must also exercise a form of internal surveillance over itself and its conscience in order to avoid infringement.

The fact is that the role of the press in democratic environments has not yet been adequately studied. While the press is not acceptable as an instrument of power, the press, as an instrument of political guidance operated by a person or group of

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persons possessing money and influence, is not lawful, and, in addition, party ownership of newspapers has not proved capable of offering political or popular newspapers which are successful in the journalistic sense. The role of the press and its ownership and orientation remains a matter subject to a long argument which must take place someday when the conditions exist for the establishment of democracy.

In conclusion, this is a tour of the horizons of Arab democracy, the cause and circumstances of its collapse, the forces opposed to it and responsible for its absence, and the possibility of someday establishing a democracy in a beleaguered Arab world.

If talk about democracy sometimes seems a sort of naive topicality and optimistic idealism -- a wilful neglect of the circumstances of fragmentation, repression, tyranny and violence in Arab societies -- it is necessary, in spite of all the risks it entails for a nationalist periodical like AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, because it touches a taboo, deals with the taboos and sacred relics of regimes, and is generally oppressive upon their reputation.

In any event, whatever regimes will accept about democracy, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI believes that it is its duty to embark on the discussion and considers that the rays of democracy in the great nation are flashing among the curtains of the invisible and shining through the black clouds gathered on the distant horizon.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER REVIEWS VARIOUS ARAB, DOMESTIC PROBLEMS

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 24-30 Oct 80 pp 27-29

/Article by Nabil Mughrabi: "Mohamed Mzali, Tunisian Premier, to AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI: Arab Political Leaders Are Suffering from a Moral Crisis"

/Text It is the first time Mr Mohamed Mzali, the prime minister of Tunisia, in his extensive conversation with AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, has spoken with such bluntness and clarity, calling things by their names as he dealt with the various touchy Arab issues of the day.

He states that Arab political leaders are suffering from a "moral crisis" which has had no parallel since the fifties, since some Arab leaders believe that they are the guardians of the entire Arab nation. These people must change their moral position.

He asserts that Arab mediation in the Iraqi-Iranian war is difficult, because the Arabs are a party to the war in one way or another.

When you ask him about Syrian-Libyan intervention in the war, he replies "That is a negative development. We are against intervention in general."

The Tunisian prime minister deals with the situation in the Gulf and Lebanon and the Camp David developments, in addition to the domestic conditions in Tunisia today, asserting that relations with Libya still require major efforts.

Here is the text of the conversation which took place in the headquarters of the premier's office in the Casbah in Tunis, in the presence of two counsellors from the office of the prime minister, the manager of the Press Department of the Ministry of Information, and the person in charge of foreign relations in it.

/Question What is your appraisal of the Iraqi-Iranian war and its future probable developments?

/Answer We are extremely sorry that war has broken out between two fraternal countries. We had hoped that there would have been a solution to pending issues by negotiation. However, we are now faced with an actual fact.

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There are reasons for this fact, foremost among them a difference on the Arab rights on which agreement was reached with Iran in accordance with the Algiers agreement concluded in 1975 but not honored.

Although the Iraqi-Iranian war has entered its fourth week, we hope that logic and an awareness of the future of the Arab and Islamic worlds will prevail over all the difficulties and that the two parties will meet at the negotiating table to create a solution to the problems outstanding.

He added,

"Since it is difficult for Arab countries to play the role of mediator, since they are a party in one sense or another, I hope that the efforts of the Islamic Conference will be crowned with success. This is what I consider. I have expressed my opinion on the struggle from the highest international podium, the General Assembly of the United Nations, and this appraisal is the position of the Tunisian government."

/Question/ You know that Iraq has accused Libya and Syria of participating in the war. What is your opinion on that fact?

/Answer/ That is a negative development we had expected and were afraid of, because it is adding to the rifts in the Arab world and is supporting the phenomenon of polarization and alliances.

/Question/ Do I understand from that answer that the Tunisian government opposes this Arab intervention on Iran's side against Iraq?

/Answer/ Of course, of course. We are against intervention in general, because nonintervention is an indication of the intent to facilitate a solution.

/Question/ So how do you evaluate the general Arab situation in the light of this war? Do you envision a solution for getting out of the crisis of disputes which is passing over the Arab world today?

/Answer/ Not since some Arab leaders started talking about Arab unity in the fifties have the Arabs differed as they are differing now. The fact is that Arab unity was a firmer fact than it is now, before one leader or another vied to lead the cause of Arab unity. Therefore, if we go easy on talk about unity and increase action on its behalf, we will realize it in a brief period of time. By action toward unity, I mean the following:

First, the cessation of all intervention by any Arab country in the affairs of other countries, leaving the responsibility to change or improve domestic conditions to the people concerned. This requires a transformation in the moral thinking of the Arab leaders. This means that it is incumbent on every Arab leader to be convinced that he does not bear a divine mission and that he does not enjoy any infallibility whatsoever in knowing the truth. That is, a given leader must not believe that he is immune from error or that he is bearing a proxy from any Arab people to lead another people into the "paradise" of unity in chains.

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The tragedy is exemplified in the fact that some Arab leaders, proceeding from 'Abd-al-Nasir, on whom God have mercy, considered themselves the custodians and tutors of the Arab nation and the least that can be said about this situation is that it holds the independence and dignity of the Arab peoples in disdain. Perhaps it involves contempt for peoples, whereas leadership is only in the name of the people and through honor for the people. Let me remind you of the Chinese proverb which says "the great leader is not one who trusts himself alone; rather, before all else, he is the leader who makes the people trust themselves." That means that the crisis with respect to Arab leaders is not political so much as it is moral.

Second, action toward unity also means the implementation of the hundreds of agreements concluded among various Arab countries in economic, educational, social, defense and other fields. If we carry out just 25 percent of their contents, we will have covered half the distance toward comprehensive Arab unity.

In spite of that, unity is not and will not be imposed from the top, either, but will be a natural logical historical result of the interaction and interconnection of interests, proceeding from our awareness of the integration of the Arab nation and its seminal solidarity; if we create a social and economic fabric and manage to purify the political climate, we will draw very close to unity.

Therefore Arab unity will come about only if we create a sound democratic climate in every Arab country in a manner where the people will participate in the adoption and execution of the political decisions through which they may sculpt their present and plan for their future.

Where, however, are we in all this? This statement of mine may seem like confused dreams. However, the true, sincere politician is the one who fights most bravely and devoutly to turn dreams into reality with the cooperation of his brothers in Arabhood and his brothers in humanity.

/Question/ Proceeding from that, do you consider that the Syrian-Libyan unity plan is also a weakening of dreams?

/Answer/ That depends on the determination and choice of the Libyan and Syrian peoples. If the two peoples believe in union, it is necessary that the leaders respond.

/Question/ Personally are you optimistic in this regard?

/Answer/ I look at the facts as they are. It is enough for me, with respect to this union, to look at the facts as they are.

/Question/ There are people who say that Camp David is the basis for the deepening Arab disputes. What is your opinion on that?

/Answer/ The fact is that about a year since the signing of the agreement, we have not observed any progress at all in solving the Palestine issue, which is the main problem. The Camp David agreement enabled Egypt to regain Sinai, but the basis of the issue still exists. Perhaps the difficulties and concerns which the

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Arab region is undergoing now result from the fact that the Palestinian issue has not found its way to a solution.

Libya, Gafsa and the Sahara

/Question/ Where do Tunisia's relations stand with the Libyan jamahiriyah? Investigations into the Gafsa incidents proved that Libya was connected to them. Libyan media are still on every occasion feeling Tunisia's pulse. How do you look upon the future of your relations with Libya, especially in the light of the plan of Union with Syria?

/Answer/ Months ago we plainly expressed our desire to look at the future without obstinately adhering to painful old memories. What concerns us is the future of relations between the two peoples, who are linked by bonds of neighborliness, language, religion and economic and social integration. I consider that the interest of the two peoples lies in drawing close, not in becoming estranged.

We also want to purify the air and consolidate trust. I hope that all other parties will strive to achieve these goals, and we for our part will not hesitate to adopt various measures to turn over a brilliant new page between the two fraternal countries.

However, frankness impels me to state that a great effort lies before us in this context if we are determined to move together in the future without faltering or suffering relapses.

/Question/ The Tunisian government is always well known for rejecting foreign intervention of any kind in its internal affairs. However, some governments unfortunately do not honor this desire. This is what happened in Gafsa, to be specific. Could one now state that Libya has ceased its interference in Tunisian domestic affairs, and has the page on the Gafsa interference been turned for good?

/Answer/ On the surface, I can confirm that every politician judges the facts according to the data available to him.

/Question/ What about relations with Morocco and Algeria? This question perforce leads us to the need to spell out Tunisia's position on the latest developments in the situation regarding the Sahara issue.

/Answer/ We have told our brothers in Morocco and Algeria that our neutrality is dictated by our determination to bring viewpoints closer and contribute to creating the proper solutions for transcending this problem. If we align ourselves with one group or another, it will be impossible for Tunisia to play any role at all in the near or distant future, but we believe in the unity of the great Arab Maghreb and believe that the future will impose it, whatever the obstacles might be.

What we can record with utmost satisfaction is that officials in Morocco and Algeria are aware of that. Perhaps, through what I have perceived from my contacts here and there, they are trying to transcend everything which will have the effect of aggravating the situation and are trying to preserve the opportunities of the future and win the bet on the future.

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/Question/ Do I understand from your talk that there is a rapprochement in the Algerian and Moroccan positions?

/Answer/ Yes, here and there I have observed moderation, calm and a readiness to reach a solution.

/Question/ That means that the Maghreb will not witness any military struggle of any kind in the future, by your expectations?

/Answer/ That is what I expect, in accordance with my information. However, I do not claim to have all the information. What I mean here is that King Hassan the Second and President Chadli Bendjedid have not and will not take the initiative of adopting any measure which will lead to the outbreak of war between the two countries, which would lead to permanent enmity between the two peoples.

It is easy for war to break out, but it is difficult to put a limit to it, and more difficult to eliminate its effects from peoples' memories.

We View the Developments in the Region with Anxiety

/Question/ Observers' expectations indicate that the region is advancing on touchy developments. How does Tunisia now view the situation in the Middle East as a whole, starting with the Lebanese crisis and ending with the Iraqi-Iranian war?

/Answer/ Our view is one of bewilderment and anxiety. As regards Lebanon's situation, that does not call for confidence. The most fearful thing I am afraid of is that Israel will succeed in "balkanizing" Lebanon. As for the Gulf, that is threatened by the war between Iraq and Iran, especially through the competition among the major powers over energy sources.

/Question/ Let us move on to internal Tunisian issues.

The first question which raises itself here is the following: since you assumed the premiership, you have been leading a splendid liberal movement. How do you evaluate this experiment? What are its limits?

/Answer/ First, I am wary about the use of the word "experiment," because we are not now at the "experimental" stage but are intending to apply a policy whose main outlines the great combatant Habib Bourguiba is still setting out and whose natural course he is still planning. Naturally your question is sound, considering that the liberation measures which the great combatant has stipulated--which are in particular embodied in the release of the trade unionists involved in the painful January events, the release of the students, and the efforts to improve the atmosphere in general--are a fact of the essence of Bourguibism, which believes in liberalism and constant constructive dialogue with the people, believes in tolerance and is striving always to make the people aware, raise their level, and enable them to participate in the implementation of the decisions it makes and modify their course. The era of this popular characteristic of Bourguibism goes back to

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the early part of the struggle, to the thirties; what you have observed in reality might be a change in language and a return to the springs of Bourguibism.

In any event, everything that happened has caused satisfaction in general and we hope that Tunisia will be an oasis of peace, security and confidence for the whole Arab nation. It was not a coincidence that our capital was chosen as headquarters for the League of Arab States and the Arab Organization for Education, Science and Culture.

The Union Problem

/Question/ Proceeding from that, what are the latest developments on the problem of the unions, especially since the latest news speaks of a final solution to the problem of Mr Habib Ben Achour?

/Answer/ There is a union crisis which preceded the 16 January events, which these events caused to worsen. This is something whose causes would take a long time to explain. We will leave that to history.

What is important is that on assuming the tasks of the premiership we found leaders who had been elected by the exceptional conference held in February 1978 and other leaders who had been elected by the 14th conference, a large number of whose members were tried after these events. All the leaders claim legitimacy--"every girl is wonderful to her father." We said, let us go beyond the choices and let us go beyond this problem by encouraging the formation of a committee which will coordinate the members of both commands. This is what the trade unionists who were concerned with the matter guided themselves toward. Even the latter leaders, who were holding the reins of matters, waived all their powers on behalf of the national trade union committee, whose task it has become to pursue the organization of a free democratic conference, indeed also to embark on ordinary trade union activity and ordinary responsibilities.

As regards the second part of the question, when the old authority, of which Habib Achour was the secretary general, met to decide whether or not it should enter the national committee, it split up into two parts: an overwhelming majority composed of nine people who agreed to participate in the committee and a minority of just two members, as well as Habib Achour himself, who opposed participating. It is the democratic base which won, of course, and the majority joined the national committee.

What the readers of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI must know is that the government did not intervene. We in our capacity as political leaders recommended, expressed desires, and issued advice, but the people in the General Tunisian Federation of Labor were the ones who made the decisions they made and on them alone today falls the responsibility of transcending the union problem and organizing a free democratic conference which will select a national union leadership that will vigilantly support the workers' organization and also enable it to play a big role in economic and social life in the country.

/Question/ Could we say that today there are no people under detention because of the January events?

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/Answer/ No, no, there are no detainees whatever, students, unionists or politicians.

/Question/ Isn't Habib Achour still under house arrest?

/Answer/ But out of prison.

/Question/ The domestic conditions in Tunisia today, especially now that the country has finally rid itself of the aftereffects of Gafsa?

/Answer/ The fact is that the Gafsa events did not shake the regime. They only created a wound as far as the people went, because there were 45 innocent victims among the people and more than 100 innocent wounded people (120, specifically), many of whom have become unemployed. However, Tunisia, thanks be to God, is still well. Tunisia was on the other hand awakened by the Gafsa events and has become more watchful in protecting its independence than before.

/Question/ What is your view of "political Islam" in Tunisia?

/Answer/ This problem does not present itself as intensely as it does in some countries of the Middle East, because Tunisia, like Algeria and Morocco, is populated only by Moslems (99.99 percent). All the Moslems in these countries are Sunnites and the overwhelming majority of them are Malikites, so we do not experience the factional doctrinal problems, if that is the proper expression, which disturb life in some Arab countries, in which factionalism is perhaps exploited in an ignoble way. That is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the country's constitution stipulates that Tunisia's religion is Islam and that its language is Arabic. Therefore the president considers himself a protector of Islam and the Moslems. Since independence, President Bourguiba has not ceased to show concern for Islam and to show concern for the interests of Moslems, and he is anxious to have education include genuine Moslem training for Tunisian youths.

Therefore it is difficult for certain extremist tendencies to find a serious entree for inciting the Moslem masses against the regime. We, for example, have not adopted and will not adopt the silly measures the Shah adopted when the Moslems challenged him and he tried to bring Iran out of its natural Islamic context.

Religious Extremism Is Contrary to Religion

He went on:

"I believe that extremism in religion is contrary to religion. Religion is prosperity, not hardship. Religion is tolerant, not fanatical, implementing (the proverb) 'They were severe with themselves, and God was severe with them.'

"Religion commands individual judgment. This President Bourguiba liberated women, developed society and purified Islam of the overlays and decline that had been attached to it and the heresies and mockeries that had been introduced into it. Islam is a struggle, it is progress and it is progressivism. President Bourguiba

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is still stating this and appealing for it. Therefore, for example, you see him issuing the personal statutes gazette, returning dignity to Moslem women in Tunisia and making them citizens with full rights and duties, 3 months after independence.. However, individual judgment must not be alienated from Islam. President Bourguiba did not do what Ataturk did, for example, and did not state that progress lies in turning away from Islam. Rather, he took the true view of Islam, called for individual judgment and mentioned that the Islamic religion is proper for every time and place."

/Question/ Tunisia is preparing to enter into a new 10-year economic plan. What is the current economic situation of the country?

/Answer/ During the new decade we will try to learn a lesson from the last two decades, with their positive and negative points. Both exist, because the negative points themselves are the greatest warning indicator and the supreme lesson.

Among the major tendencies which we will determine in the coming plan is attention to agriculture, which officials in the third world often have overlooked, rushing in an amazing manner after industrialization, on grounds that that is a dry slogan, while agriculture is a greater, awesome weapon which absolutely no people can be independent and secure without possessing. This is what is referred to as self-sufficiency in food, or security in foodstuffs. Then agriculture, if we encourage it and allocate material and human resources to it, will have the effect of guaranteeing the stability of the people and of the young, especially in the rural areas and the villages--that is, it will have the effect of placing a limit to migration to the towns, which is a catastrophe, and a great catastrophe, from various aspects, and the moral and cultural aspect is not the one which is affected the least.

The second tendency is the balance which must be provided among various areas, because there is disequilibrium between the advanced coastal areas and other areas today and it is necessary to create major development districts in the northwestern, southern and central areas.

The final tendency is to fight against unemployment by creating about 65,000 jobs every year. This will require major investments which we hope national savings will provide. We also hope that some friendly and fraternal countries will help us in that, along with the World Bank.

/Question/ In the context of fraternal countries, are there any shortcomings as far as Tunisia goes?

/Answer/ No, fraternal countries are making efforts worth mentioning and we are grateful for them.

I personally believe that there are major new areas which we have not yet absorbed, some of which we have started to identify. An example of that is the plan to establish a large Tunisian-Kuwaiti or Tunisian-Saudi bank to finance projects instead of burdening the government down with debts. These Arab financial or banking institutions' mission will not be philanthropic--they will have a yield whose fruits will be gathered not just by the Tunisian people but also by the people who have contributed to the investments, or will do so.

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/Question/ You recently returned from New York. Reports have it that your contacts and discussions in the context of the United Nations were concentrated. What results did these contacts produce?

/Answer/ The contacts were positive from every standpoint.

First, from the standpoint of the benefits of consultations, since exchanging discussion and analyses with senior officials in the world in beneficial and has the effect of bringing viewpoints closer.

Second, I talked with a number of officials about matters of a bilateral character, and this has the effect of supporting cooperation between us and these bodies and countries.

Third, these contacts have the effect of raising Tunisia's status because they present its policies, efforts and the results of its plans by showing them in their real situation. We are a people who work on behalf of peace, horizontal cooperation, that is, cooperation among brothers, and vertical cooperation, that is, between north and south.

/Question/ Especially since the Arab League moved here, Tunisia has witnessed concentrated diplomatic activity. On Friday you will meet two big personalities: Queen Elizabeth and the premier of France. Do you expect specific agreements to be signed for example with the French government?

/Answer/ Relations with France are very satisfactory and are following a natural course. What thinking is oriented toward is raising its level among the Arabs in the field of joint investments and the field of tripartite discussions--the Franco-Tunisian-Arab dialogue, for example by establishing a Tunisian-French-Arab bank, which will encourage French investors to make big diversified investments in Tunisia, which will have the effect of employing manpower.

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LEBANON

ROLE PLAYED BY IRAN IN SOUTH DISCUSSED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 22-28 Aug 80 pp 30-32

[Article: "Will Iran Persuade Palestinians to Withdraw From Southern Lebanon; Resistance Clings to Its Rifle and Its Armed Presence Which Are Guaranteed It by Official Agreements"]

[Text] Beirut -- The "official and religious" viewpoints conveyed by an Iranian clergyman who visited Lebanon and Syria recently have left various reactions among the Lebanese and Palestinian sides concerned at a time when the cards on the Lebanese arena are completely jumbled. The question raised at present is: Does Iran want to persuade the Palestinians to withdraw from southern Lebanon and to stop the daily dealings with the Zionist enemy? What is the secret in Iran's focus on displaying its absolute support, backing and protection for the armed Amal movement?

Are there Lebanese or Arab sides that seek a prominent and exclusive role for Amal in the Islamic street--a role similar to the exclusive and prominent role played by the Phalanges in the Christian street after having liquidated their ally, the Liberal Party?

Is the relationship between the Palestinian resistance and Iran undergoing a silent crisis?

Both sides deny this vehemently but the observers can cite more than one indication and proof that there is a crisis between the two sides concerning southern Lebanon on the one hand and concerning the armed Shi'ite organization of Amal on the other hand.

In the first half of the current month of August, Scholar Mohammad Ali al-Shirazi, the son of religious leader Ayatollah Abdallah al-Zhirazi in Mashhad, visited Lebanon and said that he was sent by the higher religious authorities, particularly Ayatollah Khomeyni and his father, to talk to the Lebanese and Palestinian sides concerned on the issue of the south.

To add an official quality to his visit and talks here, al-Shirazi was careful to have Dr Kemal Mosawi, the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, accompany him in his tours and his visits. Al-Shirazi met with a number of high-ranking Lebanese officials, with the religious leaders of the Shi'ite sect and with the leaders of Amal organization which is considered the sect's military arm. He also visited southern Lebanon.

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He also said that he held talks with a number of the resistance leaders. But some resistance sources say that no meeting was held with al-Shirazi as far as they know and that if Shirazi was referring to meetings that have taken place, then he perhaps meant the meetings that took place in Iran, including the constant consultations taking place through Hani al-Hasan, director of the PLO Office in Tehran.

But al-Shirazi's public and private statements and talks have been characterized by a sharp tone and have included what can be construed as a warning to the Palestinians and, perhaps, to the Lebanese National Movement. Consequently, the Iranian authorities may find themselves compelled to explain their position officially, especially to the Palestinians, on whether the said clergyman actually speaks in the name of the Iranian revolution or not and on whether what he has said publicly and confidentially reflects Iran's official view, particularly since the visit has been accompanied by intensified tension between Amal Organization and the several Palestinian and Lebanese sides and by bloody incidents which have claimed as their victims the lives of a number of prominent members of this Islamic sect which is the biggest sect in Lebanon, with a membership of over one million people.

What Does al-Shirazi Say?

Here we must review the statements made by al-Shirazi exactly and carefully. The Iranian visitor says he has asked the Palestinians to facilitate the return of the Shi'ites to their areas and their homes in southern Lebanon "even if this requires the Palestinians to abandon the area."

Al-Shirazi goes on to add that this doesn't mean that Iran holds the Palestinians responsible for the tragedy of the south. Israel is responsible for this tragedy. "However, the south is a very important area and we must protect it and not lose it as we have lost Palestine. We must avoid a second Palestine in the south."

Al-Shirazi adds that the official and religious Iranian view is summed up in the statement that the confrontation with Israel and the armed struggle to regain the usurped land do not mean that we should lose more territory.

Al-Shirazi then stresses his responsibility for these serious statements by adding: We understand and realize that the Palestinians have gone to the south to carry on with their struggle. But we also realize that it is essential "to guarantee stability and security in the south." This is considered a fundamental condition for Lebanon's continued independence "and this cannot be realized unless the southerners return to their homes."

Al-Shirazi stresses this particular point and tries to explain his country's position toward it: "I am not saying that the Palestinians must leave the south but that the southerners must be repatriated, even if this requires that the Palestinians abandon the area."

The Iranian religious official goes on to (warn) the Palestinians, saying that Iran has given the Palestinian revolution a lot "but this does not mean that we will turn a blind eye and put ourselves at their mercy or the mercy of some of their organizations. It is our duty to offer moral aid and they must take the south's interests into consideration."

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Al-Shirazi then warns that unless the situation improves, conditions in the south will develop from bad to worse and more inhabitants will be forced to abandon the area. At the same time, "they [inhabitants] are not willing to be more tolerant than they have been so far and they will not stand idle in the face of the shelling and destruction of their lands. This is impossible."

Amal Enjoys Our Support and Protection

As for the armed Shi'ite organization of Amal, al-Shirazi issues a warning, which seems to be tacitly directed at the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese National Movement, against confronting Amal, saying: "Amal enjoys our support and protection. We consider it the political and military base of the Shi'ites and we back it and offer it all possible assistance. We will not permit anybody to commit hostile action against it."

Concerning the issue of Musa al-Sadr, the religious leader of the Lebanese Shi'ite sect who disappeared while on a visit to Libya in 1978, al-Shirazi says: "His kidnapping is an act of treason aimed not only against Lebanon but also against the entire Islamic world. It is a horribel crime perpetrated by hands from outside Lebanon and I can say that other hands from within Lebanon helped in this act."

Al-Shirazi then makes a direct charge against Libya, saying: "We charge several parties with this issue. But we charge Libya with the main responsibility and we condemn it. This is not my opinion alone but is also the opinion fo the Iranian people and Iranian religious authorities. We all hold Libya responsible for this crime and we will take a clear position toward this country if the desired results are not reached."

What al-Shirazi said in his private statements and meetings and before the Lebanese officials and the religious and political leaders of the Shi'ite sect has evoked numerous reactions, especially on the Palestinian arena.

It seems that there is at present a Palestinian intention to find out for certain whether what al-Shirazi has said does actually reflect Iran's official and religious view, especially since the Palestinian leaderships know better than others that more than one Iranian religious official claims that he speaks in the name of the political or religious leadership there.

To point out this, several Shi'ite sources closely connected with the Iranian religious leaderships have hinted that al-Shirazi does not reflect Iran's official or religious view, as he claims. He perhaps represents his father only. These sources have also said that the statements in which al-Shirazi has said that his father leads the religious establishment and that Khomeyni leads the revolutionary establishment have aroused strong anger in Iran.

Perhaps this is the reason for the reservation shown by the Palestinians in holding high-level contacts or talks with al-Shirazi. It is likely that there are intentions to hold contacts or talks with the higher religious and political leaderships in Iran on what al-Shirazi and others have said regarding the Palestinian role in Lebanon.

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Will 'Arafat Visit Tehran?

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI information indicates that it is not unlikely that 'Arafat himself will visit Iran in the near future to meet with Khomeyni, President Abolhasan Bani-Sadr and the other leaderships to explain fully the Palestinian position on the south and on the Palestinian armed struggle.

This doesn't mean that the resistance is unaware of the interest displayed in the current debate over its presence in the south which the resistance considers the only remaining vital outlet accessible to it for its daily dealings with [presumably] meaning operations against] the Zionist enemy. It also doesn't mean that the resistance is unaware of the interest displayed in its relationship with the Lebanese Shi'ites by virtue of the south being the biggest population center of this sect whose struggle in the 1960's and 1970's has been largely tied to the Palestinian struggle.

The PLO Executive Committee held a special meeting under the chairmanship of 'Arafat to discuss the two issues during the presence of al-Shirazi in Lebanon. It was decided at this meeting to hold periodic meetings with the Supreme Shi'ite Islamic Council and with Amal movement leaders to exert efforts to disperse the tension prevailing in the relations between the two sides.

The Palestinian resistance has recently adopted a number of measures aimed at preventing the occurrence of frictions or violations between its forces and organizations on the one hand and the inhabitants and the other organizations in Beirut and in the south on the other hand. Such frictions and violations have been the cause of constant complaint in both areas.

In fact several meetings were held recently and 'Arafat, Abu-Jihad (Khalil al-Wazir), Abu-al-Walid (Sa'd Sayil), Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, the chairman of the Supreme Shi'ite Islamic Council, and Nabih Barri, Amal's secretary general, have taken part in these meetings.

The actual purpose of these meetings has been to make the positions clear, to disperse the elements of tension and to contain the attempts to persist in the bloody clashes between Amal and the Palestinian organization of the Arab Liberation Front [Iraq-sponsored].

It is no secret that the Palestinian and the Lebanese national circles have recently expressed their concern over a number of what seems to be ambiguous and difficult-to-understand-and-explain moves made amidst the card shuffling being witnessed by the Lebanese arena at present.

There are charges regarding Amal's strategy and it is said that Amal speaks and acts intentionally to emerge as an armed sectarian movement which, perhaps, wants to assume the main role in the Lebanese national or Islamic street. It is also said that there are those who encourage it to act in this manner and that, moreover, there are those who single out these "supporters," accusing certain security agencies in the legitimate Lebanese government of inciting Amal against the Palestinians. Meanwhile, there are those who accuse Iran of using Amal as an instrument with which to strike the Palestinian and Lebanese forces having a pan-Arab inclination.

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Amal Denies Charges

But Nabih Barri, Amal's secretary general, denies these charges and asserts that his organization in particular and the Shi'ites generally still support the Palestinian armed struggle, provided that this struggle does not result in harm to the Shi'ite population of the south, which is generally poor and underprivileged.

Barri also denies that Amal has concluded any alliances with the Lebanese security agencies or with the Marunite Lebanese Front to liquidate the National Movement (the left) or to strike the Palestinian resistance. But at the same time, Barri underlines his eagerness not to embark on alliances or agreements with the National Movement as long as there is no specific and agreed upon action charter or program.

Concerning the south, Barri stresses the southern inhabitants' eagerness to return to their villages, homes and farms which have been exposed to shelling as a result of the ongoing war there between the Israelis and their man, the renegade Maj Sa'd Haddad, on the one hand and the Palestinians on the other. Barri also denies that his organization has any relationship with Haddad.

These accusations on the part of the Palestinians and the National Movement and their denial by Amal do not eliminate a painful fact, namely that there are manifestations of lack of trust between the two sides. The bloody clashes, assassinations and physical liquidations have helped to deepen the suspicion and the doubts to the degree of saying that the Syrian security forces are also not far from what is happening by evidence of the firm relationship binding Syria with Amal movement.

Some observing Lebanese political circles go still further in their analyses and their calculations, depending on "information" disseminated by the Phalangist sources, to say that what has taken place in the Christian street [presumably meaning clashes between Phalanges and Liberals] will occur in the Islamic street.

What is meant by this is that the emergence of the Phalanges as an exclusive political and military force on the Christian arena after the Phalangists' liquidation of the military force of their ally, Camille Sham'un, will be countered by an endeavor to inflate and highlight the role of a [certain] political and military organization on the Islamic arena and that Amal movement, according to the Phalangist information, is qualified to play this role of confronting the Palestinians, as the Phalanges want, and to swallow, or at least, contain and neutralize the other Islamic or leftist organizations, as the Syrians--who have gotten tired of dealing with this enormous number of political and armed forces existing in the Islamic street--want.

The information disseminated by the Phalanges goes on to say that exclusive control by the Lebanese Forces and Amal movement over the Christian and Islamic arenas will make it easy to reach the political detente agreement among the Lebanese with the blessing of Damascus that has recently had contacts with the Phalanges through visits made by Phalangist officials to the Syrian capital.

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Amidst this atmosphere and these rumors, Shirazi's visit and statements come to further perplex the Lebanese and the Palestinians regarding what is happening on the Lebanese arena.

In any case, the Palestinians cling to their armed presence on the Lebanese arena, especially in the south. They say that this presence is a matter of life or death for them and for their cause because the daily friction with the enemy is what keeps their cause alive and hot at the Arab and international levels and is what gives them the political weight which they are enjoying at present.

This is at the level of the revolutionary and struggle logic. As for the "legitimacy" of this presence, the Palestinians say that they are armed with a number of agreements concluded with the Lebanese government, beginning with the famous Cairo agreement of 1969 and the subsequent agreements and ending with the Tunis agreement concluded last November between Lebanese President Ilyas Sarkis and 'Arafat--an agreement which contains an official Lebanese assurance of approval of the continued presence of the Palestinian bases in the south.

Therefore, the Palestinians will fight any Lebanese, Arab or Iranian attempts to wrench the rifle away from their hands or to deny them their armed presence on the Lebanese arena. This is also why the Palestinians will view with suspicion and doubt any Iranian attempt to persuade them to give up these bases. There is no doubt that such an attempt will lead to tense relations between the Palestinians and the Iranian leaderships if these leaderships truly interpret the repatriation of the southerners in the south to mean Palestinian abandonment of the Palestinian bases and presence in the south.

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LEBANON

FINANCIAL POSTURE OF PHALANGES DISCUSSED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 22-28 Aug 80 pp 48-49

[Article: "Preparation for Declaring Secession and Partition; Phalanges State Collects 3.6 Billion Lebanese Pounds Annually and Denies Legitimate State Its Revenues and Taxes"]

[Text] Beirut -- In its previous edition, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI published ample details on the administrative and financial agencies of the Phalanges state. This paper publishes today in detail the fees and the taxes collected by this state from "its citizens" in the absence or negligence of the legitimate government. The paper leaves the matter in the hands of President Sarkis, of the Arab States and of their forces that are present in Lebanon, being content with drawing attention to the preparations proceeding actively to partition Lebanon.

The informed financial and tax circles here say that the administrative and financial agencies of the Lebanese Forces, which are practically comprised of the Phalanges Party militia, secure for the Phalangist "veto" annual resources estimated at 3.6 billion Lebanese pounds.

This figure is equal to or exceeds a little the budget of the legitimate Lebanese state--a budget amounting to 3,585,000,000 pounds in 1980. The difference between the two "states" is that the legitimate state is incapable of collecting the equivalent of 50 percent of its revenues and taxes for security reasons whereas the agencies of the Lebanese Forces can collect their revenues in full and at the expense of the legitimate state's resources and revenues.

In this regard, the issue of the illegal ports on the Lebanese coast can be pointed out. The Phalanges Party declared the closure of these ports in the wake of its liquidation of its partner, the Liberal Party, on 7 July 1980.

However, what has happened is that these ports were actually closed for 3 weeks after which they resumed operation under the supervision of the Phalanges Party's agencies which are in full control of these ports.

The reason for this, besides the political aspect required by the Phalangist strategy, is economic. It is estimated that the fees that can be collected for goods unloaded at these ports amount to no less than 0.5 billion Lebanese pounds annually, including the fees charged by the Lebanese Forces for (containerized goods at the rate of 5,000-15,000 Lebanese pounds per container).

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The value of the fee set depends on the size of the container and of the goods it contains.

Thus, the Phalanges Party is sharing with the state treasury the collection of customs fees for imported goods, keeping in mind that the treasury's share of these fees is estimated at 700 million Lebanese pounds in the current year.

Figure Will Double If...

Dr 'Ali al-Khalil, the minister of finance, says that this figure [of 700 millions] will be doubled in the first year in which the illegal ports are closed.

As for the other Phalangist revenues, they have been estimated at no less than 250 million Lebanese pounds monthly. The most important of these revenues are summed up in the following:

1. The Lebanese Forces collect from every bank branch annually a sum of 12,000 Lebanese pounds for the alarm system connected to the Phalanges military center and 10,000 pounds in guard fees.
2. The alarm system also applies to the industrial and commercial companies, each of which pays 10,000 Lebanese pounds annually, in addition to the guard fee whose value varies from one establishment to another, depending on the size of the company and the volume of its commercial and industrial operations.

A guard fee collected from owners of stores and amounting to no less than 100 pounds monthly and rising according to the size of the store.

A guard fee for individuals in their homes, beginning with 5 pounds monthly per person and reaching in some cases more than 500 pounds monthly.

Fees collected from trucks that unload their freight in the area. The value of the fee varies according to the type and volume of the goods. For example, a truck loaded with cement pays a set fee of 700 Lebanese pounds for every load.

A fuel fee whose value also varies according to the type of fuel, beginning with fuel oil, gas oil and ending with aviation kerosene. It is well-known that the Lebanese Forces collect a fee of one pound for every 20-liter can of benzene.

Real estate revenues estimated at hundreds of millions of Lebanese pounds annually. These fees are not confined to real estate transactions in the areas controlled by the Phalanges but include transactions in the governorates of Mount Lebanon and of Beirut, with both its eastern and western sections, because the Lebanese Forces have seized the real estate records in both governorates and have levied Phalangist fees, in addition to the official state treasury fees.

Phalangist Fees

The most important of the Phalangist fees are:

1. A registration fee amounting to 2.5 percent of the value of a property.

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2. A set fee of 1,000 pounds in return for the issuance of a registration certificate.

Beirut and Mount Lebanon are considered the most active areas in terms of real estate transactions as a result of the increased activity of the purchase, sale and trading in lands and apartments.

The Lebanese Forces have taken the measures necessary to set up Phalangist traffic police patrols which are expected to start their operations any day now, especially since several hundred police motorcycles have reached Beirut recently. Naturally, traffic fines are also considered a source of the revenues of the "Phalangist state's" budget.

These are the most important sources of the Phalangist financial revenues. There are other sources which cannot be mentioned here. But what draws attention is that the Phalanges Party has been able to secure the money necessary for the creation of its state whereas the legitimate state is threatened with bankruptcy and borrows from banks to pay the wages of its employees and to pay for its urgent expenses.

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LEBANON

BANK DEPOSITS IN LEBANESE POUNDS DECLINING DUE TO DETERIORATING SECURITY

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 22-28 Aug 80 p 49

[Article: "Beirut: As Result of Deteriorating Security Situation, Increased Transfer of Deposits From Lebanese Pounds to Foreign Currencies"]

[Text] Beirut -- Despite the stability in the exchange rate of the Lebanese pound versus the dollar since the beginning of the current year—a rate ranging from 339-343 piasters for a dollar—as a result of the measures taken by the Central Bank and as a result of the decline in the value of the dollar itself, the escape from Lebanese currency to the foreign currencies is still going on.

Though this was due to the rise in the interest rates paid for foreign currencies in the first quarter of this year rather than due to the security situation, the situation has been different in the past 4 months.

The reason for the current escape is the serious deterioration in the security situation and the escape is taking place despite the fact that the interest rate paid for foreign currencies abroad has declined.

It has become evident from the Central Bank statistics that the deposits placed with commercial banks increased by 6.8 percent during the first quarter of this year and rose from 20,044,000,000 dollars [sic] at the end of 1979 to 21,405,000,000 dollars [sic] in March 1980, i.e. these deposits rose by 1,361,000,000 dollars.

The foreign currency deposits absorbed most of this increase, considering that the value of these deposits rose from 7,073,000,000 pounds to 8,205,000,000 pounds, i.e. by 1,132,000,000 pounds [units as given].

This caused the foreign currency deposits to rise from 35.3 percent to 38.3 percent of the total deposits of the Lebanese banking apparatus. This constitutes a record figure never known before.

On the other hand, the share of the deposits in Lebanese currency dropped from 64.7 percent to 61.7 percent, keeping in mind that the deposits themselves rose from 12,971,000,000 pounds to 13.2 billion pounds, i.e. by 329 million pounds (1.7 percent).

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What draws attention is that the increase in the foreign currency deposits comes from residents, i.e. from the Lebanese whose deposits have risen from 5,606,000,000 pounds to 6.71 billion pounds, i.e. by 1,104,000,000 pounds.

These people have deposited their monies in set-term saving accounts which have risen in their turn from 3,293,000,000 pounds to 4,393,000,000 pounds, i.e. by 1.1 billion Lebanese pounds.

In the face of the rising foreign currency deposits of the Lebanese citizens, the Central Bank has had to reduce its foreign currency assets deposited abroad from 4,974,000,000 pounds to 4,839,000,000 pounds, i.e. by 135 million pounds, within the framework of a plan to preserve as much as possible the stability in the Lebanese pound's exchange rate in the local markets.

There is no doubt that the delivery to the Central Bank of 133 million dollars of the total Arab aid for Lebanon agreed upon by the Tunis summit conference has contributed to curtailing the impact of the escape to the foreign currencies on the Lebanese currency's exchange rate.

As for bank loans registered procedurally at the Central Bank, they rose in the first quarter of this year by 5.5 percent from 12,894,000,000 pounds to 13,611,000,000 pounds.

It has been noticed that the commercial loans, especially loans for financing the imports required to secure the local consumption needs, had the lion's share, amounting to 53 percent of the loaning movement and rising from 6,733,000,000 pounds to 7,219,000,000 pounds.

As for the other sectors, the loans advanced to them were as follows:

Loans advanced to the industrial sector rose from 2,214,000,000 pounds to 2,422,000,000 pounds, with a share of 17.7 percent.

The loans to the agricultural sector rose from 299 million pounds to 322 million pounds, with a share of 2.3 percent.

The loans advanced to the construction sector dropped from 1,536,000,000 to 1,398,000,000 pounds, with a share of 10.2 percent.

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MAURITANIA

TRIAL OF MOKHTAR OULD DADDAH VIEWED AS PARODY

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 3 Dec 80 p 17

[Article by Abdelaziz Dahmani: "It Was Nevertheless True"]

[Text] Lawyer Mokhtar Ould Daddah, ex-President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was sentenced in absentia to "life at hard labor" by a "Special Court of Justice" which convened on Friday November 21 in secrecy in Rosso, in the southern part of the country. The court also sentenced to death in absentia Col Ould Ba Abdel Bader, ex-Commander of the Air Force and ex-Minister of Education, also in exile. Other sentences were also passed against 10 other members of the Military.

The preparations for this trial, one of the more scandalous in the history of justice in Africa, were known for a long time. We did not dare mention it, hoping it would not take place, knowing it caused a clamor and very strong opposition within the official Mauritania, particularly among magistrates. Even some members of the Military, members of the CMSN and others whose names were known to us, refused to sanction this parody. At the last minute, President Khouna Ould Haidalla had to enlist two always-obedient officers, Lt Col Cheikh Ould Boida, President of the Special Court, and Lt Col Dia Amadou, Prosecutor.

We decided to discuss the trial when it became imminent (see our last issue), and the trial opened in Rosso in an administrative building requisitioned that same morning, on the same day our issue 1038 was published.

To go all the way, Lt Col Dia Amadou even asked for the head of the ex-President who was naturally not represented by counsel. To think that on 28 November 1980, Mauritania will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its independence! That one of the objects of pride under the regime of Mokhtar Ould Daddah was the real independence of justice! That on the day of the coup of 10 July 1978, there was not one single political prisoner! That for 16 years (from 1962 to 1978), there were no executions.

One cannot help thinking, by comparison, of the hands cut-off in the name of Islamic justice.

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One thinks especially about the message sent by Lieutenant-Colonel Haidalla to the new Chief-of-State of Guinea-Bissau on the day of the conviction of Ould Daddah, asking Joao Bernardo Vieira "to spare the life of the ex-leaders, and that honorable treatment be given Luis Cabral."

While Dia was stating on Nouakchott radio that the trial had "No political overtones", from his Parisian home where we managed to contact him, Mokhtar Ould Daddah dropped: "it is pitiful."

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TUNISIA

TUNISIAN CABINET RESHUFFLED

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Dec 80 p 23

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen]

[Text] The chief of state hesitated a long time before going ahead with the cabinet reshuffle of 3 December, which brought Mr Caid Essebsi and Mr Tahar Belkhodja into the government (JEUNE AFRIQUE No 1040). Yet everyone was surprised. What prompted his decision? The insistence, not of his associates, but of his prime minister Mohammed Mzali and his interior minister Driss Guigua.

Very much committed to the liberalization effort begun 6 months ago, the two men almost saw the experiment abruptly interrupted on 20 November following the interview granted by President Bourguiba to members of the executive committee of the employer association UTICA (Tunisian Union for Industry, Trade and Crafts).

Close Call

One of the members, Mr Mohamed Ben Abdallah, a very prominent businessman and a native of Sfax, explained the reservations, if not the apprehension, of employers regarding an emerging trade union. He went even further, accusing certain members of the national trade union commission of having aims hostile to the government. He mentioned names and events. Mr Bourguiba noted this, summoned the minister of the interior and demanded that those persons be thrown into Borj Roumi prison.

Mr Driss Guigua quickly pointed out to him that both events and remarks had been distorted. Thus Mr Ben Abdallah was then removed from the UTICA executive committee. The incident is over, but it was a close call. The process of liberalization is still shaky. This move by employers has come as a reminder to those who might have forgotten and were not mindful that supporters of a strong-arm policy are lying in wait. That is why it was necessary to act.

Mr Caid Essebsi's return is also considered by a Communist Party (banned) member as "a second wind for Mr Mzali's policy, which was beginning to

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make headway." The supporter of a liberalization of government and party structures for 10 years, the former minister of defense and the interior has become a ministerial delegate to the prime minister, i.e., simultaneously adviser to and personal representative of the president of the republic.

Limited Powers

Bourguiba thus endorses a coalition: the Ministry of Information has been assigned to Mr Tahar Belkhodja, whose return was most recently advocated by his successor, the minister of the interior, Mr Driss Guigua. At the same time, the Ministry of Information is being separated from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which will ultimately remain assigned to Mr Fouad M'Bazaa, who had initially been considered as a replacement for Mr Belkhodja as ambassador to the FRG.

Mr Mohamed Sayah's powers are also limited to the Ministry of Public Works alone, with Housing becoming an independent ministry assigned to Mr Moncef Belhadj Amor, formerly minister of administrative reform. The president's declared intention is to relieve the former all-powerful director of the Destourian Socialist Party (PSD) from as much responsibility as possible so that he can devote himself to the final three major chapters of the history of modern Tunisia.

The only newcomer to this second Mzali ministry is Mr Mezri Chekir. This former director of the same Mohamed Mzali, and one of the prime minister's men (very few, it is true), is "inheriting" the ministry of Mr Belhadj Amor. Be that as it may, the real importance of the cabinet reshuffle of 3 December lies in the reintegration of the PSD's dissident factions since 1970.

Except for Mr Ahmed Mestiri's group, which continues to demand a party in the name of the socialist democrats' movement.

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TUNISIA

BRIEFS

SOCIALIST INTERAFRICAN IN TUNIS--Tunis will be the site of the Socialist Interafrican headquarters, contrary to the expectations of the Tunisians and on the urging of none other than (soon-to-be ex-) President Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 24 Dec 80 p 38]

1500 TUNISIANS FIGHTING IRAN--There are 1,500 young Tunisians who have enlisted in the Iraqi armed forces (JEUNE AFRIQUE No 1939). Workers or students before the outbreak of the war against Iran, they are now in the battalion known as the "Arab Liberation Army" with other young men of various nationalities, including Egyptians in particular. [Text] [Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 17 Dec 80 p 32] 11915

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WESTERN SAHARA

OFFICIAL ATTACKS U.S., FRENCH MILITARY AID TO MOROCCO

PA042301 Havana PRELA in Spanish 2103 GMT 2 Jan 81

[Report by Wilfredo Fernandez]

[Text] Algiers, 2 Jan (PL)--Saharan Information Minister Mohamed Salem Ould Salek charged that France and the United States are the principal advisers and providers of sophisticated weapons for Morocco in its aggression against the Western Sahara.

In statements to PRENSA LATINA, Ould Salek said that despite that aid, "the morale of Hassan II's army is very low and that currently 80 percent of the weapons being used by the Saharan forces have been taken from the Moroccans."

He claimed that by the end of 1980, the main Moroccan units had been dismembered.

The Moroccan defeats took place despite the fact that French, U.S., South African, Israeli and South Korean experts have participated in a thorough reorganization of the Moroccan Army, he added.

Ould Salek said there is conclusive evidence of the participation of France and the United States in the armed conflict designed to evict the Saharan people from their territory. He gave as examples the recent combats at Rous-Lekhyalat, in the Ras-el-Khanfra region, where on 27 December the Polisario Front downed two planes, a Mirage F-1 (French) and a Phantom F-5 (North American), used by the Moroccan Air Force.

He added that despite all its artillery arsenal such as the 155, 122, 105 and 106 cannons, machineguns of every type, armored vehicles, tanks and transport trucks equipped for any type of terrain, the Moroccan troops suffered over 600 casualties in recent battles.

The Saharan Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR) minister and member of the Polisario Front's Political Bureau, explained to PRENSA LATINA that "the Moroccan forces only occupy three Saharan cities, El Aaiun, Dakhla and Smara."

There, he noted, the Polisario Front's "Houari Boumedienne" offensive has frustrated the Moroccan plans to isolate these cities from the rest of the Saharan Democratic Arab Republic.

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He said the Rabat regime intended to build forts and large dividing areas, for which it had started to use French and U.S. materiel, mainly large mechanical vehicles for military engineering projects. [passage indistinct]

The Saharan minister pointed out that in the past year, the Moroccan Army had suffered the biggest military setbacks since 1975 in the Western Sahara conflict.

He voiced the opinion that while the Moroccans receive material support from France and the United States, the Saharani people have the moral solidarity of the international community that demands respect for the SDAR sovereignty and territorial integrity: two conditions that are indispensable for achieving peace in that North African region.

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END